

APRIL IS AUTISM AWARENESS MONTH

The cause or origin of Autism is still a mystery and impacts people regardless of race or ethnicity. About 1 percent of the world population has autism spectrum disorder.

Autism is America's fastest growing developmental disability. More than 3.5 million Americans live with an autism spectrum disorder, and tens of millions worldwide are affected by autism.

Today, it is estimated that 1 in every 54 children is diagnosed with autism, making it more common than childhood cancer, juvenile diabetes and pediatric AIDS combined.

Boys are also approximately 4.5 times more likely to have an autism diagnosis than girls of the same age. However, recent research suggests that girls may not show autism in the same way as boys and might go undiagnosed as a result.

Autism impacts an individual throughout their lifespan. However, research shows that early diagnosis can lead to improved quality of life. For more information on developmental milestones, visit the CDC's "Learn the Signs. Act Early" site <https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/actearly/index.html>.

Here are some signs to look for:

- Speaks later than typical or not at all (nonverbal);
- Repetition in language or movement, such as repeating the same word or sounds, hand flapping, or any repeated movement;
- Atypical nonverbal communication, including avoiding eye contact, giving few facial expressions, or having a monotone;
- Prefers solitary or parallel play rather than engaging in associative or cooperative play with other children;
- Extremely distressed by changes, including new foods or changes in schedule;
- Preference for predictable, structured play over spontaneous or make-believe play;
- Strong, persistent interest on specific topic, part of a toy, or item.

To learn more about autism at every age, visit <https://www.autism-society.org/>.

Detective Hector Gonzalez of the Bal Harbour Police Department in partnership with the Autism Society of Greater Orlando leads Officer training for Autism Awareness throughout Florida, Georgia and the United States Department of Interior. During the past 12 years, over 38,000 individuals received the Autism Awareness training. For more information, please contact the Bal Harbour Police Department @ 305-866-5000.

